

Message Text

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SUBJECT: FOOD AVAILABILITY: CENTRAL ASIA

1. BEGIN SUMMARY. THERE IS GOOD AVAILABILITY OF FRESH
VEGETABLES AND FRUITS IN BOTH STATE STORES AND PARTICULARLY
IN KOLKHOZNIYE RYNKI IN URGENCH, KHIVA, SAMARKAND, BUKHARA
AND DUSHANBE. THERE WERE FEW SHORTAGES OF DAIRY PRODUCTS.
MEAT IS OFTEN QUITE EXPENSIVE BUT CAN USUALLY BE FOUND
(EXCEPT IN BUKHARA). EGGS ARE SOMETIMES A LITTLE HARD TO
FIND. THERE ARE OCCASIONAL SPOT SHORTAGES OF SOME OF THOSE
FOOD ITEMS THAT MUST BE IMPORTED. MEATLESS THURSDAYS
APPARENTLY DO NOT EXIST IN CENTRAL ASIAN CITIES. END SUMMARY.

2. EMBOFFS, IN CENTRAL ASIA BETWEEN DECEMBER 5 AND 14,
VISITED BOTH STATE STORES AND AT LEAST ONE RYNOK IN EACH
OF THE CITIES LISTED ABOVE. BOTH OUTLETS HAD MUCH BETTER
SUPPLY AND SELECTION OF FOOD PRODUCTS THAN IS THE CASE IN
THE CITIES OF THE RSFSR. RESIDENTS OF ALL THE CITIES
AGREED THAT THE FOOD SITUATION WAS ADEQUATE; ONLY IN BUKHARA
DID PEOPLE OBSERVE THAT IT WAS SOMETIMES DIFFICULT TO GET
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MEAT, AND THAT WHEN AVAILABLE IT TENDED TO BE EXTREMELY
EXPENSIVE. THERE WERE SEVERAL OBSERVATIONS THAT GOODS
IMPORTED FROM ELSEWHERE IN THE USSR OR ABROAD ARE OCCASIONALLY
HARD TO FIND; COFFEE AND COCOA WERE MENTIONED SPECIFICALLY.
EGGS WERE RARELY SEEN ON SALE AND WERE USUALLY MORE EXPEN-
SIVE THAN THEY ARE IN MOSCOW. LOCAL RESIDENTS CONFIRMED

THAT THERE ARE OCCASIONAL SPOT SHORTAGES OF EGGS. LOCALLY PRODUCED COTTONSEED OIL IS EASILY AVAILABLE AND APPARENTLY IS ALWAYS TO BE FOUND. MEAT WAS USUALLY BEEF OR LAMB; THERE IS LITTLE PORK IN MOSLEM CENTRAL ASIA. THERE WAS LESS FISH THAN IS USUALLY SEEN IN THE RSFSR, BUT SUPPLIES WERE GENERALLY GOOD. THE REGION PRODUCES MORE RICE THAN POTATOES AND THE LATTER ARE OCCASIONALLY IN SHORT SUPPLY. CABBAGE, APPARENTLY MOSTLY FOR THE RUSSIAN POPULATION, IS AVAILABLE IN LARGE QUANTITY.

3. HOTEL RESTAURANTS HAD MENUS AS EXTENSIVE AS THOSE IN HOTELS ELSEWHERE IN THE USSR. IN NONE OF THE CITIES VISITED DID ANY RESTAURANT--FOR FOREIGNERS OR LOCALS--SEEM TO OBSERVE THE INSTITUTION OF MEATLESS THURSDAY, COMMON ELSEWHERE IN THE USSR. THE "CHAYKHANE," LOCAL EQUIVALENT OF THE STOLOVAYAS SEEN ELSEWHERE, NEARLY ALWAYS HAD SHASHLIK TO SELL.

4. RYNKI: THE RYNKI VAIRED IN SIZE; THE LARGEST AND BEST STOCKED WAS THE SAMARKAND MAIN RYNOK; THE LEAST IMPRESSIVE WAS KHIVA'S ONE RYNOK. ALL THE RYNKI HAD A BETTER SELECTION OF FRUITS THAN OF VEGETABLES. APPLES AND POMEGRANATES WERE ABUNDANT, SELLING AT BETWEEN R. 1.50 PER KILO (ALL PRICES IN RUBLES PER KILO UNLESS OTHERWISE STATED), AND 3.00 DEPENDING ON QUALITY. PEARS, WHILE OF GENERALLY GOOD QUALITY, WERE IN SMALLER QUANTITY EVERYWHERE AND OLD FOR ABOUT 2.00. A SMALL SUPPLY OF GRAPES WAS AVAILABLE IN ALL THE RYNKI, AS PRICES FROM 1.50 TO 2.50, BUT THE END OF THE SEASON WAS FAST APPROACHING. MELON AVAILABILITY VARIED, FROM STAGGERING IN SAMARKAND AND DUSHANBE, TO NON-EXISTENT IN KHIVA. THE HONEYDEW TYPE WAS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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IN FAR GREATER QUANTITY THAN WERE WATERMELONS. AVERAGE PRICES WERE 0.80 FOR THE FORMER, 0.35 FOR THE LATTER. DRIED FRUITS, PARTICULARLY RAISINS, WERE IN VAST SUPPLY EVERYWHERE; PRICES VARIED ACCORDING TO QUALITY, AVERAGING 2.50. THERE WERE SMALLER QUANTITIES OF DRIED FIGS, DATES AND DRIED MELONS. WALNUTS WERE 3.00 TO 4.00, AND SMALL QUANTITIES OF PEANUTS AVERAGED 2.00.

5. VEGETABLES: CARROTS WERE ON SALE EVERYWHERE, IN SMALL QUANTITY BUT WITH NO APPARENT SHORTAGES, AT ABOUT 0.50. ONIONS (0.50), RADISHES (0.30), CABBAGES (0.30 AND 0.40) WERE ALL AVAILABLE, THE LATTER IN LARGE QUANTITY EVERYWHERE. POTATOES WERE AVAILABLE EVERYWHERE, EXCEPT IN URGENCH AND KHIVA, AT 0.50 TO 0.60. RICE (0.80), AND SEVERAL KINDS OF BEANS (0.90 TO 2.00) WERE TO BE FOUND EVERYWHERE EXCEPT KHIVA. GARLIC, HERBS, GREEN ONIONS AND DRIED PEPPERS WERE AVAILABLE EVERYWHERE.

6. OTHER RYNKI PRODUCTS. EGGS WERE FOUND IN SAMARKAND ONLY AT 1.70 FOR TEN AND SOLD OUT BY 2:00 P.M. LIVE CHICKENS COULD BE OBTAINED AT SAMARKAND (8.00 EACH) AND IN BUKHARA (9.00 EACH), BUT QUANTITY WAS LIMITED. THE BUKHARA RYNOK FEATURED HONEY AT 4.00.

7. STATE STORES - URGENCH. A LARGE GASTRONOM NEAR THE OBKOM BUILDING WAS VISITED AT 1545 ON DECEMBER 6 AND AT 1015 ON DECEMBER 7. ON BOTH VISITS THERE WERE SMALL QUANTITIES OF SECOND QUALITY KOL'BASA AT 1.50, LARGER QUANTITIES OF FIRST QUALITY KOL'BASA AT 2.50, AND LARGE QUANTITIES OF UNAPPETIZING DRIED FISH AT 2.00. THERE WERE NO DAIRY PRODUCTS OF ANY SORT ON THE FIRST VISIT AND ONLY FAIR SUPPLIES OF YOGURT AND BUTTER ON THE SECOND. THERE WAS COTTONSEED OIL FROM TASHKENT IN LARGE QUANTITY AT 0.87 PER BOTTLE.

8. SAMARKAND. A SERIES OF SMALL FOOD SHOPS NEAR THE MAIN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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REGISTAN SQUARE WAS VISITED AROUND NOON ON DECEMBER 8. THEY OFFERED LARGE QUANTITIES OF THE SAME COTTONSEED OIL AT 0.87, ADEQUATE SUPPLIES OF BOTH CHEDDAR-TYPE AND PROCESSED CHEESES AND BUTTER, A GREAT DEAL OF YOGURT AND SOME FRESH MILK. LAMB FAT WAS ON SALE AT 1.30. FRESH CUCUMBERS WERE 1.43, ONIONS 0.24, CARROTS 0.22, AND APPLES 0.75, ALL IN GOOD QUANTITY. TWO MEAT SHOPS NEAR THE MARKET HAD FIRST QUALITY LAMB AT 3.00, AND BEEF AT 2.50. AT 1415 ON THE 8TH THERE WERE SHORT LINES AT BOTH; LONG LINES AT BOTH WERE OBSERVED ON THE 9TH AT 1115. A SMALL FOOD SHOP OFFERED A HIGHER GRADE OF LOCAL COTTONSEED OIL AT 1.30, IN ADDITION TO THE USUAL VARIETY AT 0.87.

9. BUKHARA. GASTRONOM NO. 15, IN THE CENTER OF TOWN, OFFERED, AT 1630 ON DECEMBER 11, ADEQUATE QUANTITIES OF BOTH PROCESSED AND NATURAL CHEESES, FROZEN FISH (HAKE) AT 0.90, FOR WHICH THERE WAS A SHORT LINE, AND KOL'BASA AT 1.75 FOR WHICH THE LINE WAS MUCH LONGER. A FISH SHOP NEXT DOOR HAD ADQUATE QUANTITIES OF TWO GRADES OF HAKE AT 0.90 AND 1.10, AND MACKEREL AT 1.50, BUT NO OTHER FISH AT ALL. AN OUTDOOR FISH SELLER NEARBY WAS OBSERVED AT VARIOUS TIMES ON TWO SUCCESSIVE DAYS SELLING APPARENTLY LIMITLESS QUANTITIES OF FRESH FISH TO AVID CUSTOMERS AT 1.85.

10. DUSHANBE. A LARGE GASTRONOM AT 79 ULITSA LENINA WAS VISITED ON DECEMBER 12 AT 1730 AND ON THE 13TH AT 0930. ON BOTH OCCASIONS THERE WERE LARGE QUANTITIES OF PLUCKED AND DRESSED CHICKEN AT 2.50 AND SMALLER QUANTITIES OF INDIVIDUALLY PACKAGED "EARLY BIRD BROILERS" FROM ATLANTA, GEORGIA, AT 2.80. THERE WERE ALSO SMALL QUANTITIES

OF PLUCKED AND DRESSED DUCK ON BOTH OCCASIONS AT 1.50.
DURING OUR FIRST VISIT THERE WAS FROZEN LIVER AT 1.30 AND
FROZEN, PACKAGED SECOND-QUALITY LAMB AT 1.85. THE FISH
SECTION OF THE SHOP HAD SMALL QUANTITIES OF STURGEON AT
4.00, AND TWO KINDS OF FROZEN FISH AT 0.40 AND 0.80.
THERE WERE ADEQUATE QUANTITIES OF KOL'BASA AT 2.10.
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LARGE QUANTITIES OF TADZHIK COTTONSEED OIL AT 1.40 WAS
AVAILABLE. A LEMON SELLER WAS NOTED ON TWO SUCCESSIVE
DAYS WITH VAST SUPPLIES OF LEMONS. HE DID A BRISK BUSINESS
AT 0.23 PER LEMON. A DAIRY SHOP AT 89 ULITSA LENINA, ALSO
VISITED ON BOTH DAYS, HAD ADEQUATE QUANTITIES OF KEFIR,
YOGURT, BUTTER, MILK, SOUR CREAM, AND CHEESES BOTH TIMES.
IT ALSO OFFERED THE LOCAL CHICKEN AND DUCK, AT THE SAME
PRICE, PORT FAT AT 1.70 AND FEEF FAT AT 1.90. A VEGETABLE
SHOP HAD, AS LATE AS 1800, ADEQUATE SUPPLIES OF CARROTS
(0.16), ONIONS (0.18), BEETS (0.06), CABBAGE (0.10) AND
THE LEMONS AT 0.23 EACH.

11. BREAD. THERE WERE ADEQUATE SUPPLIES OF BOTH RUSSIAN
AND NATIVE BREADS IN ALL THE CITIES, ALTHOUGH BY THE END
OF THE DAY, IN ALL THE CITIES, THE NATIVE BREADS WERE
USUALLY SOLD OUT, AND THE RUSSIAN ONES WERE STILL AVAILABLE.
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